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LETTER

UPON THE

Agricultural and Mineral Resources

OF THE

North-Western Territories,

ON THE ROUTE OF THE

NORTHERN PACIFIC RAIL ROAD

By PHILIP RITZ,

OF

Walla Walla, Washington Territory.

TO THE HONORABLE

Senate and House of Representatives.

Having been a resident of Washington Territory and of Oregon for seventeen years, and having passed over the different routes between the Atlantic and Pacific several times, I have from personal observation obtained much information respecting the resources, wealth, and climate of the country intervening, and many items which have never been embodied in any report, and which may be of service to those in the East who know comparatively little of that rich country now so rapidly settling. I propose to lay before you, briefly, the result of my examination, trusting they may give some new light upon the subject of the Northern Pacific railroad, which is all important to the development of the territory lying north of the 45th parallel.

Since the discovery of the rich gold and silver mines in Montana and the commencement of the Union Pacific road, the entire aspect of the interior of our country has most rapidly changed. The progress of that interior within the last two years has been greater than its whole previous progress; and now, as there have within the last few months been great lines of mail steamships established between this country and China, the trade will increase beyond all calculation on the Pacific coast.

So rapidly are the resources of our interior being developed and our commerce increasing on the Pacific, that within a very short time, almost before the road on the Central route can be completed, it will be found that one road will not be able to do the amount of business that will offer. The idea that prevailed a few years since,

before the question of the Pacific railroad was as well understood as it now is, that not more than one road across the continent could be sustained, is fast being exploded.

The country really needs three grand trunk lines, and will eventually build and sustain them: the Southern, the Central, and the Northern. And that there will be no antagonism between the roads, in reference to way-travel, is evident, as each road will drain a wide extent of country bordering on it, as in the case of the Northern and Central, the distance apart from San Francisco to Puget Sound being about 800 miles, and running nearly parallel, probably the nearest point of approach being Cadotte's Pass and Bear river, distant about 500 miles; so that, if the intermediate population is simply a pastoral one, to say nothing of the rich gold, silver, copper, lead, nickel, iron, and coal mines, known to exist along and between each line, the country would, when thus settled up, afford a population to the running mile of road greater than the way population of any road in the United States. The small portion of the Central road that is now completed, is paying very largely, and is rapidly increasing.

With the completion of these great lines across the continent, there would be access furnished to millions of acres of the public domain, on which would be erected hundreds of thousands of happy homes in the interior of our country, all the way from the Gulf of Mexico to the forty-ninth parallel, and would draw large numbers of the population away from the crowded cities of the Atlantic, where, in many in-

stances, they do not find a support without the assistance of charity, to where they could find cheap homes and plenty to do in furnishing food for the millions who would then settle in our mountains, and work out the mines with machinery, which, if these roads were not built, must remain untouched for ages.

I believe that, if the three roads were now built, that within ten years there would be gold and silver enough taken out of the mountains to pay off the national debt. It is also the opinion of many of our wisest and most comprehensive statesmen with whom I have conversed, that it would be wise policy for the Government at the present time to assist directly—at once to build these roads, in order to render available the great extent of our public domain, now inaccessible in the interior of our country.

It is manifest that one road is not equal to the public need, and would be unjust to the people of the country. If three roads are built it would be more to the interest of the Government to use the three roads than it would be if but a single road was built. If but one road is built, to wit, over the central line, the Government would still be obliged to provide for the transportation of its mails and munitions of war over the northern and southern routes, which are already a very important item, as in the mails, from Chicago to Montana.

With these general remarks I will now offer a brief account of my observations on the northern route, particularly the Rocky mountain portion, having travelled thoroughly over it at four different times within the last two years, twice in mid-winter. In the first place, commencing at Puget Sound, we find there an immense inland sea, perfectly land-locked, and safe from storms, and always free from ice and fogs, with a shore line of over two thousand miles in length, with water so deep and free from rocks that the largest vessels can tie up in safety to the trees which line the shore. At the same time this immense harbor is surrounded by a rich, fertile soil, capable of supporting a population as great as that of the New England and Middle States, together with unlimited forests of the finest timber for ship-building and for lumber, with extensive coal and iron mines and fisheries, and immense quarries of granite

and limestone, and an unlimited water-power, and everything which goes to build up and sustain a great commercial centre.

Previous to the purchase of Alaska, San Francisco was considered about the centre of our possessions on the Pacific. But, with the acquisition of Walrussia, the Straits of Juan de Fuca are no longer on our extreme northwest; but we have an extensive sea coast, reaching 1,200 miles to the north, and San Francisco ceases to be the only centre of commerce for the Pacific coast, whilst Puget Sound becomes the geographical centre.

It is urged by many that San Francisco, having such great wealth centred in and around her, and being the great commercial entrepot of the Pacific, and having the start of Puget Sound, that no point can ever rise on its waters to importance. What does history teach us on this subject? How many cities have arisen and fallen on the shores of the Mediterranean, and given place to other cities, century after century. And on our own Atlantic seaboard, New York was not always the great metropolis of the Atlantic.

The time was when Newport, in Rhode Island, was the commercial mistress of our thirteen colonies, and New York did not become first until after a struggle of more than one hundred years.

Show me a spot that Nature has pointed out as fitted for the seat of commerce, and I will show you a point where the enterprise of the American people will found a great city and establish a great commerce. It is simply a question of time.

The lumber trade alone of Puget Sound is already quite an item, and has but fairly commenced. Last year the amount shipped in lumber, spars, and piles amounted in measurement to 400,000,000 feet. The spars find their way to almost every port in the civilized world, and this trade must increase in value each year, as we find on the shores of Puget Sound and Alaska the two last great forests in the world accessible to commerce.

There are two termini provided in the charter of the Northern Pacific railroad upon the Pacific coast—one at Puget Sound and the other at Portland, Oregon.

Leaving Puget Sound, going east, the route passes up to the divide of the Cascade range on a very moderate grade to Sno-

qualmie Pass at an elevation of 3,030 feet, nearly 4,000 feet less than where the central road crosses the Sierra Nevada, and crosses the summit at a distance of 75 miles from Seattle.

On this section there are fine agricultural lands, timber, and coal; and on the eastern slope of the Cascades there are known to exist large coal beds, and rich deposits of gold all the way to the British possessions. From the summit level there will be an easy grade to the head of the Yakima and down its valley for 145 miles to the crossing of the Columbia.

In the valley of the Yakima there are some of the finest agricultural lands to be found in Washington Territory—where the settlers have raised good corn, and a climate so mild in winter that it has been considered for a number of years the safest place to winter large herds of cattle east of the Cascade mountains.

Ninety-six miles above the mouth of the Yakima are extensive forests of yellow pine, which can be rafted down during high water to points along the line of road. At the crossing of the Columbia river the other line from Portland forms a junction with this. Portland is now the largest town in Oregon and is the terminus of the line of steamers from San Francisco and the point at which the business of the Willamette valley centres and from which the Oregon Steam Navigation Company extend their line of steamers up the Columbia to Wallula, 340 miles from the Pacific. This would give a connection at once with the line east, by means of steamers, while the road was being constructed.

Or starting from the mouth of the Peluse, on Snake river, the point to which steamers ascend from Portland nearly the whole year, to Fort Benton, on the Missouri, where large numbers of steamers arrive and depart every season, it would be but 525 miles. Or, to take the route via Pend'Orellie lake and Clark's Fork of the Columbia, where there are three steamers and 200 miles of navigation, would reduce the actual travel by stage at this time to 375 miles, on the line of the North Pacific road, between the Pacific and the Atlantic.

This steamboat navigation, reaching nearly across the continent on the northern route, will be found to be of very great advantage in constructing the line, as the

work can be commenced at eight different points at the same time, and as before shown, workmen and material can be forwarded on the Columbia and Missouri to within five hundred miles of each other.

From the crossing of the Columbia to the Cœur d'Alene Mission, at the entrance of the Bitter Root mountains, is 182 miles.

The route for the first ninety miles of this section lies over a rolling prairie, with very good grass, but no timber. The remaining distance to the mountains lies through fine groves of pine timber, with the finest of grazing most of the way, rich alluvial bottoms, and streams of the purest water.

This section crosses what is known as the great plains of the Columbia, extending from the southern boundary of Oregon, and lying between the Cascade range on the west and the Blue and Bitter Root mountains on the east, and stretching far into the British possessions in the north.

This country, until very recently, has been considered more especially fitted for a pastoral country, but in every instance where the cultivation of the soil has been attempted, the results have proven quite satisfactory, not only in the raising of all kinds of grain and vegetables, but all kinds of fruits of the temperate zone in the greatest perfection.

In the Walla Walla valley, which is about equally divided by the 46th parallel, and has been settled scarcely seven years, were produced in 1866 over one million bushels of grain, six hundred thousand of which was wheat. I have seen in that valley large fields of wheat average fifty bushels per acre; and in 1867 the best quality of flour, put up in fifty-pound cotton sacks, sold for \$3 75 (gold) per barrel, and yet this valley was not taxed to one-fifth of its capacity of production. This valley alone would be able to supply the whole force employed in constructing the Western Division with flour, beef, and bacon at cheap rates.

It is not generally known in the East that we have a climate west of the Rocky mountains that will admit of raising peaches and grapes and sweet potatoes, as far north as the 47th parallel.

Four years ago last spring I planted in the Walla Walla valley an orchard of one thousand small yearling trees. Last sum-

mer I raised from that orchard over one thousand bushels of the finest quality of peaches, apples, pears, plums, cherries, and grapes; and in 1865 I raised over thirteen thousand pounds of sweet potatoes. [I ask pardon for making use of this personal notice, but as it may appear strange to some I prefer to assume the responsibility myself.] And still there are thousands of acres lying unclaimed, and near this railroad route, which will produce as well as the Walla Walla valley.

All that this country needs to make it a desirable place for hundreds of thousands of homes is a railroad to render these places accessible, and to bring the timber and lumber down from the mountains on either side of these plains, where there are unlimited forests, which will remain useless until some way is devised to get it out on the plains, thereby rendering both sections valuable. Let a railroad but be built, and in a short time all these plains will be dotted over with cottages, with their little farms, and orchards, and herds.

From the Cœur d'Alene Mission to the summit of the mountains is forty-eight miles, where a railroad can be built at an elevation of 3,990 feet. From this point down the St. Regia Borgia to the crossing of the Bitter Root river is thirty-nine miles. This portion of the route passes over what is known as the "Mullan road," and is the route over which three-fourths of all the travel and freight now passes from the Pacific to Montana, and over which about 100 wagons passed last season, including an emigrant train from Minnesota with persons from the age of three months to ninety-five years. This train passed over in November with the loss of but one animal, proving that the route cannot be very difficult, and yet this is considered the most difficult part of the entire route—between Lake Superior and Puget sound. All of this section is timbered with the finest quality of pine, cedar, and fir, with rock and all the material for building a road on the ground, and no portion of this will be as difficult of construction as from Harper's Ferry to the Ohio river on the Baltimore and Ohio road. From the crossing of the Bitter Root to Hellgate valley, sixty-five miles, the country is much of the same character, excepting that the valley is wider and the grades some-

what lighter. From Hellgate valley to Cadotte's Pass, the summit of the Rocky mountains, a distance of 114 miles, there are settlements all the way, with many good farms in Bitter Root valley, where the settlers raise good crops of wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, and in some instances corn and tomatoes. Near Hellgate are three flouring mills, and to such extent have the settlers raised wheat already that last summer good flour was sold at the mills for \$10 (gold) per barrel. This will be found to be one very great item in building this road over any other route, that of having supplies of flour and provisions raised on the ground and furnished at low rates. From the summit level of the tunnel at Cadotte's Pass, which is estimated at 4,072 feet, more than 4,000 feet lower than where the Central road passes the same range, to Fort Benton is 105 miles.

While this pass retains its height for less than three miles at this place, on the central route, the road passes over an elevation of from 6,569 feet to 8,242 feet, for a distance of 150 miles, as taken from the report of the Secretary of the Interior. The greatest elevation being at the Black Hills, 8,242 feet; Rattlesnake Hills, 7,132; and at Dodge's Summit, of the water shed, 7,108; and the lowest point reached on this section is at the crossing of the Medicine Bow river, 6,569 feet; and yet this road will be finished and cars running over it within a very few months.

From Fort Benton (the point to which large numbers of steamers ascend the Missouri every year with large numbers of passengers and heavy stocks of merchandise for the Rocky mountain district) to the western line of Minnesota, near Fort Abercrombie, is 793 miles. This part of the route passes over a rolling prairie country, near the Missouri, crossing a number of small rivers, on which will be found a supply of timber for the road, and passing through a country susceptible of supporting a large population the entire distance. From the western boundary of Minnesota to Lake Superior, 232 miles, is a very rich agricultural country, already settled, with railroads running in different directions at all seasons of the year; and yet there is always more snow in winter in Minnesota and Eastern Dakota than on any other portion of the route, excepting about the summits of the ranges of the mountains crossed, and at

these places the route lies through heavy timber, so that the snow will not drift.

From Cadotte's Pass, which is in latitude 47 degrees, 6 minutes, to longitude 44 degrees, 10 minutes, on the headwaters of the Jefferson fork, there are no less than seven well-known passes through the Rocky mountains. In fact the whole range is so completely broken down for two hundred and fifty miles in length that the waters of the Columbia and Missouri, rising on the mountain spurs, and very often beyond each other, are in some instances brought down in ditches for mining purposes—the waters of the Missouri over to the Pacific slope, and those of the Columbia to the Atlantic slope.

In regard to the climate of this portion of the Rocky mountains, I have crossed the summit at different places on this section in mid-winter, both last winter and the present one, on horseback and in the stage, and so free from snow are these passes from the effects of wind currents coming from the great plains of the Columbia and the Pacific ocean, that I found no difficulty in crossing at any time, and I did not find the snow over six inches deep on the 30th day of December. The settlers and miners pass back and forth over the mountains almost every day during the winter, and large herds of cattle and horses are wintered on the Deer Lodge and Little Blackfoot rivers, within ten miles of the summit of the Rocky mountains without a morsel of food being provided for them.

I know of one party who has two hundred head, and another has thirteen hundred head. Both have wintered their cattle here for two seasons, and have never put up any hay for them, but leave them to graze during the winter months. And at Fort Benton, for the last twenty-five years, there has not been snow enough for the fur company to take their goods to the different posts on sleds in winter, having to use carts for that purpose.

I have learned that this is no unusual thing. In conversation with Victor, head chief of the Flathead nation, and who is now about seventy years of age, and remembers distinctly when Lewis and Clark came through this country, he stated that, since the memory of the Indian, they had passed through these mountains, year after year, through the winter months, often

with their women and children, with pack animals laden down with furs and meat. Other Indians and trappers have told me the same.

It is evident that this route possesses greater natural advantages than any other route across the continent in soil and climate, capable of sustaining animal life, from the fact that it was the route selected by Lewis and Clark sixty-three years ago to cross to the Pacific ocean. Their information of the country must, of course, have been obtained from mountaineers and Indians, who had been led into the country by the large numbers of game known to rove through these passes for ages. The scientific engineer may find it policy to cut through some mountain spurs or tunnel some lofty summits, but the great practical, paying routes will be found to be those first marked out by the deer thousands of years ago in passing from one well-watered and good grazing ground to another. And on its track followed the Indian in the chase; next the trapper with his pack horse; after him the pioneer with his wagon; and finally there follows over the very same general route, the greatest and highest achievement of science and civilization—the iron horse and the lightning messenger. Had it not have been for the accidental discovery of gold in California this would undoubtedly have been the route first selected for the Pacific railroad.

I have been asked by persons here, "Will the Rocky mountain district ever be settled?" In reply, I would say that on the first of last November (1867) I left Walla-Walla on horseback alone to go into the Rocky mountains on business, passing through the eastern part of Washington, the northern part of Idaho, and travelling more than 1,500 miles in Montana, and put up at a house every night with good accommodations, and had grain for my horse in almost every instance.

Montana at this time has a population of 65,000 souls, and has towns of from 3,000 to 6,000 inhabitants, with fire-proof buildings, costing \$75,000, and stocks of goods worth from \$100,000 to \$200,000; and valleys producing 100,000 bushels of wheat; and public schools and churches; and its daily and weekly newspapers, which would be a credit to any country, and yet all this improvement and settlement has been made

within three or four years, and that, too, without the immediate prospect of a railroad, and none of the aids and excitement which the starting and commencing of such an enterprise would furnish.

Another reason why the northern road should be built is that it runs near to the British possessions for 1,500 miles, and would drain all that rich agricultural region of the Red river and Saskatchewan country, east of the mountains, and all the rich gold mines on the Kootenay, the Thompson's, and the Frazier rivers, on the west, and lying north of the 49th parallel.

The revenue to our Government from this source alone would be very great indeed, and a road would then not be attempted to be built by England, and the whole country would soon become so thoroughly Americanized (as already more than half the miners in that country are Americans) that they would in a short time be asking for annexation to the United States, and by the time that our population would need more territory, the British Possessions would become ours without conquest, and almost without purchase.

Here I would just add that a petition has already been circulated in British Columbia to the home Government, containing the following significant language: "That we humbly submit to your Majesty's gracious consideration, as the only policy to bring back prosperity to our homes, to wit: Either that your Majesty's Government may be pleased to relieve us immediately of the expense of an excessive staff of officials; assist the establishment of a British line of steamers with Panama, so that emigrants from England may reach us, and also assume the debts of this colony, or that your Majesty will graciously permit the colony to become a portion of the United States. That every feeling of loyalty and cherished sentiment of our hearts prompt us to cling to our present connection with our mother country, and to count as our best inheritance our birthright as Britons; but all our commercial and business relations are so intimate with the neighboring American population that we see no other feasible help out of our present difficulties than by being united with them, unless your Majesty's Government will help us as aforesaid."

We think it has been proven that the

northern route is not only capable of sustaining a large population on the entire distance, but that the summits are about four thousand feet less than on the central line; that the distances, on an average, from San Francisco and Seattle to the different ports on the Atlantic shore, are three hundred and sixteen miles less than on the central route, and that a degree of longitude being less on the 47th than on the 38th latitude, makes the distance by ocean from Canton to Liverpool, on the northern route, some eight hundred miles less, making in all over one thousand miles less on the northern route between Asia and Europe than over any other route across the continent.

The sum of ascents and descents from St. Paul to Seattle is 21,787 feet, and 29,387 feet on the central route. These figures give the best practical index of the effect of the gradients to increase the cost of transportation.

Engineers allow one mile for every 52.08 feet of rise and fall as denoting the additional working expense over a level route. This difference would make one hundred and forty-four miles more in favor of the northern route. Then add to this the fact that Liverpool, and all the principal ports in Europe, lie between the 46th and 53d degrees of latitude north, and we have again in favor of the northern line an average of 250 miles on the Atlantic, making in all a real distance of 1,116 miles, in addition to a practical working distance of 144 and 250—1,510, giving in reality 1,510 miles advantages to the Northern route over any other route across the continent between Liverpool and Canton.

These facts show that not only is Puget sound nearer Asia than San Francisco, but that the overland distance to the principal cities on the Atlantic coast, and especially the great lakes, (where freight can be shipped, without breaking bulk, to Europe direct,) is much less than the distance from San Francisco to the same points by either the central or the southern route, and that the grades are much easier on the northern route than on any other route, and the grade is one of the controlling elements in carrying freights. Add to this the fact that the northern route will be self-sustaining the entire distance, while on the central route there are hundreds of miles that will

not produce even grass, and to which the company must actually transport fuel for the use of its road.

Taking all these things into consideration, and that we have the finest harbor in the world on Puget Sound, surrounded with all the great and permanent resources of wealth, capable of accommodating the shipping of the whole world in safety, and that the distance is so much shorter from Liverpool to Canton, over the northern route than any other across the continent, it is evident it will be for the interests of the Government to avail itself of this route in the transportation of its troops, munitions of war, and the mails, not only for our own country, but for the British possessions, and for Europe and Asia, together with the express freight, and all costly articles, such as teas and silks, which will be an immense item within a few years, not only to Europe, but to our own Mississippi valley, when it comes to contain a population of 50,000,000 souls, which it soon will.

In this connection, I may state that it has been estimated that a ton of freight can be delivered at Chicago by the northern route for less than it can be delivered at Rock Island, on the Mississippi, by the central.

Indeed, a comparison of the distances and the cheapness of down-river freights show that a ton of freight can be taken from Seattle, over the Northern route, to St Paul, and placed on a steamer and delivered, not only at Rock Island or St. Louis at less cost than it can be delivered at either of these points by the central route, but it can descend the Mississippi and be delivered at any point thence to New Orleans at less cost than from San Francisco, either by the central or the southern route.

In giving these statistics and in making these comparisons, I do it with no invidious feeling whatever toward the central or any other competing route, as we of the North are glad to see our friends of the central road pushing their work through with such energy and vigor as to astonish the whole civilized world. The sooner there is a continuous rail from New York to San Francisco the better for the people of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana, in common with those of California, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado, and I think that the

Government will find that the aid extended to the central route will prove to be the best loans ever made, as the increase in taxes and revenue must prove very great, indeed. But I give these statements simply to show that in all the essential characteristics of travel and of commerce, in respect to distances, and other natural advantages, the northern route has the advantage. And if the friends of the route and of the Government in general will prove true to their own interests, they will build up and establish on our own soil a great national highway between Lake Superior and Puget Sound, over which will flow, through the beautiful valleys and over the mountains of Washington and Montana, the great golden current of wealth from the Orient, which has ever borne empire on its pathway.

To build this road, which no company is able to do without assistance from the Government, I understand the company do not ask for capital; all that they ask for is the endorsement of the Government, substantially as furnished to other and similar roads as a basis of credit.

The provisions of the bill are such as to preclude the possibility of the loss of a single dollar by the Government. And I feel sure that the business of the road will be so great even from the commencement, that not only the interest but the bonds will be paid off promptly at maturity.

There is no reason why the northern road should not pay as well or even better than the central. And from the report of the Secretary of the Interior "the Union Pacific Railway Company furnished a table showing that the amount retained by the United States Treasurer from that due the company on the Government business, for the month of August last, is nearly eight per cent. per annum of the principal of the bonds issued to the company on account of the construction of the road." This would repay the principal at no distant period by the Government business alone, should it be continued to the same extent. The payment of the bonds at maturity is, therefore, considered by the company to be fully assured, and the road as being built, so far as the Government is concerned, simply by the loan of its credit for a term of years upon ample security, and without the actual expenditure of a single dollar from the

public treasury. With the aid of the credit thus asked for, I have no doubt that the company can not only construct the road, but save the Government from any possible loss, and add largely to the population, power, and wealth of the nation.

In this communication the distances on a portion of the route and many important

statistics have been taken from the excellent report of our lamented Governor Stevens, whose hallowed memory every citizen of Washington Territory loves to cherish.

Very Respectfully,

PHILIP RITZ.

Washington City, D. C., March 9th, 1868.

